(b) The public sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) market petrol and diesel through their network of retail outlet dealers and kerosene through wholesale dealers. The OMCs take action against the dealers found indulging in irregularities in terms of the provisions under Marketing Discipline Guidelines. During the last three years, the OMCs have taken action against the following number of dealers for indulging in various irregularities/malpractices:—

Year	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
No. of dealers	778	616	1911

(c) and (d) The distribution of kerosense to the consumers under the Public Distribution System (PDS) is handled by the State Governments who monitor the distribution and take action against black-marketing/ overcharging of the product. Information regarding the cases where retailers/ fair price shops have been found selling PDS kerosene at a higher rate in comparison to the rate prescribed by the Government during the last three years is being collected from the States/UTs and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Petroleum smuggling

*32. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the recent reports regarding growing number of petroleum smuggling business operations in the country, particularly in Western coastal line;

(b) if so, Government's response thereto; and

(c) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken against such illicit petroleum smuggling in the country?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. All Customs field formations including Directorate of Revenue Intelligence are alert and vigilant to prevent and thwart attempts of petroleum smuggling into the country particularly on Western Coast line. Based on specific intelligence regarding smuggling of HSD into the country, the DRI conducted searches and seized 8.950 MT of HSD at Kakinada Port in March, 2006. In April and May, 2006 the

Commissionerate of Customs conducted two operations in Indian waters around Mumbai port in which approximately 3 lakh litres of smuggled HSD have been seized.

Production of natural gas from gas hydrates

*33. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently huge gas hydrates in Krishna-Godavari basin have been discovered;

(b) whether it is also a fact that India is looking at producing natural gas from gas hydrates on commercial basis;

(c) if so, whether India has got that technology since such a technology *i.e.*, producing natural gas from gas hydrates is not available in any part of the world; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) Gas hydrate deposits have been found in the Krishna-Godavari offshore basin in one of the wells drilled/cored by the hired drillship "Joides Resolution" in a recent drilling/coring programme for finding gas hyderates in Indian waters.

(b) to (d) Internationally, all exploration programmes for gas hydrates are still at Research and Development stage. Gas from the gas hydrates is primarily methane gas. Feasible production technologies for extracting natural gas from gas hydrates on a commercial scale are yet to be developed any where. India is also pursuing R&D in gas hydrates.

An initiative under the National Gas Hydrate Programme (NGHP) has been launched to pursue India's objective to progress towards commercialization of gas hydrates and keep pace with developments taking place internationally to find a technological solution for extraction of gas from gas hydrates on a commercial scale.